

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /076 W

-----160628Z 052965 /22

P 160547Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2679

INFO SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

JCS WASHDC

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2131

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI MARR KS US

SUBJ: PRESS REPORTS ROKG WILL SEEK OPCON

1. KOREA TIMES MARCH 15 REPORTS THE ROKG HAS STARTED WORKING ON TRANSITION MEASURES TO ADAPT THE NATION'S DEFENSE STRUCTURE TO THE PHASEOUT OF U.S. GROUND FORCES, TO INCLUDE TAKING OVER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE DEFENSE FORCES OF KOREA FROM THE UN COMMANDER. THE STORY, ATTRIBUTED TO "INFORMED SOURCES," ADDS THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS IS BEING CONSIDERED TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF THE KOREAN ARMED FORCES AND THE U.S. FORCES IN KOREA WHILE THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE U.S. GROUND FORCES IS UNDERWAY. IT FURTHER NOTES THAT "THE TRANSITION WILL ALSO ENTAIL THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSION..."

2. THE KOREA TIMES ALSO REPORTS THAT THE ROKG PLAN IS EXPECTED TO BE PRESENTED TO THIS YEAR'S KOREA-U.S. SECURITY CONSULTATIVE MEETING, WHICH THE STORY SAYS THE ROKG "INTENDS TO HOLD IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR."

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3. STORY (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND COMES FROM MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE SOURCES) CARRIED IN KOREA TIMES' SISTER PUBLICATION, HANKUK ILBO, BUT NOT IN OTHER PRESS. TONGA ILBO MARCH 14 CARRIED LESS ELABORATE STORY PRESENTED LARGELY AS REPORTER'S SPECULATION REGARDING NECESSITY FOR CHANGE IN COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS, WHILE LEAVING ARMISTICE SYSTEM UNCHANGED. JOONGANG EDITORIAL WRITER ON MARCH 12 ALSO

RECOMMENDED TRANSFER OF OPCON IF U.S. TROOPS WITHDRAWN.

4. MND SUH AND STAFF DIRECTOR ROK/JCS LT. GENERAL YU
PYONG-HYON HAVE IN RECENT DAYS QUESTIONED CINCUNC AND
CHARGE RESPECTIVELY ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO
COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS. NEITHER SUH NOR YU SPECIFICALLY LAID
OUT ROK POSITION BUT THEIR QUESTIONS PLUS ROK EXPRESSIONS ON
SUBJECT OF OPCON AT PAST SCMS SUGGEST THAT THESE NEWS
ARTICLES HAVE CONSIDERABLE SUBSTANCE. ACCORDINGLY, WE
INTERPRET ARTICLES AS INITIAL SIGNAL OF OFFICIAL ROK VIEWS
THAT THERE IS BOTTOM LINE ON U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL BELOW
WHICH ROKS INTENDS TO DEMAND TRANSFER OF OPCON.
STERN

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